







Jujubes

## Specialty Crops - Central Valley

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Capers



### Guide to Asian Specialty Vegetables in the Central Valley, CA



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**Smooth luffa** – (*Luffa cylindrica*): Dishrag gourd (loofah) originated in India and was later taken to China. With the exception of the cosmetic damage from a caterpillar, it has the same pest as opo. Left to mature on the plant the squash will produce the familiar “Luffa sponge” found in stores and used as a dishrag or great back-scrubber (hence the name). Soak the light brown mature gourd in 10% bleach for 24 hours, then peel off the skin and allow dry. Trillised. Warm season.

Most of the luffa grown in the Central Valley is for the young squash like fruits. Slice Luffa into 1” pieces and stir-fry with shrimp in a tempura batter and cooked in oyster sauce, or simply stir-fry in butter by itself or with other vegetables. Be careful not to overcook as it will become mushy.



**Chinese Winter Melon** – (*Benincasa hispida*): Dongqua melons usually weigh in excess of 30 pounds and are harvested when mature and have developed the white wax bloom on the skin. Because of its size, it is not well-suited for allowed to spread over the ground. Like the other cucurbits, it is attacked by spider mites, aphids, nematodes, and viruses.

The mature melon can be stored for 3-4 months over the wintertime. The flavor is mild, white and is a main ingredient in chicken broth soup with other vegetables or stir fry with pork, onions, and mushrooms. An elaborate dish is made by carving the skin like a canoe, then filling the melon with other vegetables and meat. Steam until the melon flesh is soft.



Desert Specialties  
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Dates



Korean melons



Desert Specialties  
(continued)  
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Basil



amaranth



Fresh dill